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## Third Committee

**Summary record of the 38th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 8 November 2004, at 9.30 a.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. Kuchinsky ..... (Ukraine)
*later:* Ms. Kusorgbor ..... (Ghana)

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*The meeting was called to order at 9.50 a.m.*

**Agenda item 103: Elimination of racism and racial discrimination** (*continued*) (A/59/18, A/59/275, A/59/276, A/59/330, A/59/329, A/59/425 and A/C.3/59/4)

1. **Mr. Lukyantsev** (Russian Federation) stated that the fight against racism in its various manifestations had become a priority in international activity on behalf of human rights; it was an issue of fundamental importance, because its underestimation often led to tragic consequences. Prevention of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and religious intolerance should be a key policy aim of all countries without exception. In today's world, it did not suffice to publicly condemn or legislate against discrimination. Human rights standards ought to be part of the culture and educational system, and of every individual's world view.

2. In the World Conference against Racism, held in Durban, the overwhelming majority of countries clearly demonstrated their resolve to react firmly, by passing relevant legislation, fostering opposition to racism in public opinion, and doing their utmost to eradicate the phenomenon. A specific and unified strategy needed to be adopted to ensure implementation of the final documents of the Durban conference. The tasks of working groups and the Special Rapporteur were a significant part of that strategy, particularly in regard to peoples of African origin; the Russian Federation would continue to provide all possible support to United Nations activities in that context.

3. At the initiative of the Russian Federation, during the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights, resolutions had been passed against contemporary forms of racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, condemning neo-Nazism and public meetings where that ideology was promoted. The speaker was surprised that on the eve of the sixtieth anniversary of the victory against Nazism in the Second World War, there were countries in the Commission that had disagreed with the Durban document, and in fact had even called into question the decisions of the Nuremberg Tribunal, and the aims of principles of the United Nations – an organization that had been created in response to the sufferings inflicted by fascist ideology.

4. The fight against racism was closely related to the rights of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities. Establishing a coordinated and appropriate approach to solving those problems would ensure harmony and inter-ethnic peace between States. Unfortunately, some countries that had recently joined the European Union continued to discriminate against specific population groups on the basis of national and linguistic characteristics.

5. According to international agencies and human rights organizations (and the affected communities themselves), the situation in Latvia and Estonia remained highly problematic. The situation had been made worse by the attitudes displayed by the authorities of those countries towards national minorities, whose members were labelled "occupiers". Furthermore, mechanisms to uphold the rights of Russian-speaking minorities were being ignored. Following reform of the education system in those countries, secondary education in the languages of national minorities was being dismantled. In Estonia, the Primary and Secondary Education Act allowed arbitrary decisions to be taken regarding the maintenance of schools that taught through Russian.

6. The Government of Latvia had cut off all dialogue with national minorities. Pursuant to the Education Act signed into law by the President of Latvia in 2004, Latvian was being taught in Russian schools, and only 40 per cent of teaching activities were being given in the Russian language. By 2007, Russian would probably have disappeared altogether from the education programme in that country. Moreover, totalitarian methods including intimidation, political and administrative sanctions, and even deportation were being used to put pressure on activists, in violation of all international standards of human rights. Latvia was increasingly non-compliant with repeated recommendations made by the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Latvian politicians were showing a total lack of respect for the main national linguistic community, and were attempting to label young people on ethnic criteria and use discriminatory practices to drive Russians from the country.

7. In Latvia and Estonia, serious inter-ethnic problems had been aggravated by the activities of neo-Nazi groups in those countries, which was an insult to the memory of the thousands of victims of

fascism. As the Prime Minister of Sweden had stated in 2000 at the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, Nazism was on the march again through the streets of Europe, and that was unacceptable. Every swastika, every raised fist, served as a warning and an assault on democracy.

8. **Ms. Kleitman** (Israel) said the issue under consideration was intimately related to the mandate of the United Nations, an organization that had been founded in large measure to combat racism and racial discrimination, and to ensure the right of peoples to self-determination. The United Nations had been created following a dark period of history in which massacres had been committed for ethnic and racial reasons, and entire peoples had been denied the right to self-determination.

9. It would be both disingenuous and immoral to speak of racism today without referring to anti-Semitism, an ever-present blight on humanity that had recently gained renewed vigour; it was a phenomenon that was not only disagreeable and offensive, but also extremely dangerous. Anti-Semitism had always existed, but in recent years it had grown to alarming proportions. Since mid-2000 there had been a sharp increase in the number of anti-Semitic incidents throughout the world, with their sequels of violence and terror. Such acts included bombing and setting fire to synagogues and Jewish community centres, desecration of cemeteries, harassment and intimidation of individuals and groups, and a steep increase in anti-Semitic propaganda.

10. In the Middle East, a heightened climate and culture of hatred against Jewish people permeated both official and private media, which combined dehumanizing images of Jewish people with insults dating back to mediaeval Europe, and Nazist theories of a Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world. The sadly infamous "Protocols of the learned elders of Zion" had become a best seller, and, in the past two years, at least two television series based on classic anti-Semitic defamation had been broadcast to large audiences. The pernicious hatred of the Jew as an individual, of Judaism as a religion, and of the Jewish people as a nation had not diminished. Today, there were calls for the destruction of Israel and the end of the Jewish State, which represented the latest manifestation of anti-Semitism. Classical anti-Semitism had aimed to deny Jews their legitimate place in society. The new anti-Semitism sought to deny the Jewish people their legitimate place among the community of nations.

11. Israel welcomed the fact that the international community had begun to react to the danger represented by anti-Semitism, and the conference on the subject held last June under the auspices of the United Nations Department of Public Information had been a fundamental step forward. The remarks made by the Secretary-General at that conference had made a major contribution to the struggle against the scourge of anti-Semitism. The OSCE conference on the same subject, held in Berlin in April, had been another seminal event, and its outcome, the Berlin Declaration, had been a turning point. Israel looked forward to the day when resolutions condemning anti-Semitism or other forms of prejudice, racism and intolerance would no longer be necessary; but in the meantime it was crucial that the General Assembly energetically condemned anti-Semitism in all relevant resolutions.

12. Like the United Nations, Israel had been born under the guiding principle that all peoples had the right to self-determination. The vision of the founding fathers of Israel involved the establishment a modern State in the ancient homeland of the Jewish nation, in order to uphold its right to self-determination, while living in peace and security with its neighbours. The State of Israel had always recognized the right of all peoples to self-determination. That included the Palestinian people, whom Israel had no interest in subjugating – as attested to by the disengagement plan announced by the Israeli Government. Israel stressed its full support for the two-State solution articulated in the Road Map. Nonetheless, the right to self-determination did not translate into a right to violence. No political grievance justified terrorism and murder. To be implemented honestly and fairly, the right to self-determination had to be exercised alongside respect for the right of others to their own self-determination. The conflict in the Middle East was political, not racial; and keeping the hope of peace alive required mutual respect and recognition to make negotiation and compromise possible. In their desire for self-determination and peace, the Palestinian people had suffered the tragedy of a leadership which, instead of working towards peace, had placed obstacles in the path to self-determination.

13. Lacking a partner for peace, the Israeli Government was seeking to promote the new Road Map. The security fence aimed to reduce terrorism,

sponsored implicitly and explicitly by the Palestinian leadership, in order to prevent the situation from obstructing the progress of both peoples towards the two-State solution. Israel looked forward to the day when it could live alongside its Palestinian neighbours, with both peoples enjoying their right to self-determination and peace.

14. **Mr. Gregoire** (Dominica), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the member States of that community had a deep-rooted historical view of issues of racism and racial discrimination, since their societies had emerged from the fight against inhuman conditions of slavery and indentureship, and from the persistence of colonialism. It thus recognized the lingering effects of those evils on the development process among societies and their peoples.

15. The inequitable social and economic conditions currently facing many countries were partly due to those historical misdeeds. For that reason, the CARICOM States supported meaningful and speedy debt relief, free and fair trade, special and differential treatment, and comprehensive initiatives in favour of sustainable development such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The success of such measures would generate the conditions needed for a more equitable distribution of wealth, most of which had been generated from slavery, indentureship and colonialism.

16. In the context of the global struggle against racial discrimination, the speaker paid tribute to the bicentenary of the independence of Haiti, which had been achieved following a lengthy struggle by its people to overthrow slavery and oppression and inaugurate an era of freedom.

17. Aware of the impact of racism and racial discrimination on the process of underdevelopment, the CARICOM States attached great importance to speedy implementation of the Durban Declaration and its Programme of Action; and it endorsed the work being done by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, which was providing technical cooperation to Governments and institutions. Also fundamental was the work done by independent eminent experts, and by the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent.

18. The CARICOM States concurred with the view expressed in the High Commissioner's 2004 interim report that, despite the commitments made by the international community at Durban to fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, alarming manifestations of those phenomena continued to occur, based not only on traditional forms of racial discrimination, but also new forms of targeting non-nationals, refugees and immigrants. The speaker agreed with the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur to the Commission on Human Rights to implement national programmes to combat those scourges, to promote the concept of pluralism and foster dialogue between cultures and religions, to formulate an intellectual strategy to combat racism, discrimination and xenophobia, and to ensure that the legitimate struggle against terrorism did not breed new forms of discrimination against specific populations, religions, cultures or ethnic groups.

19. The CARICOM States supported implementation of the recommendations made by the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, regarding the need to compile data from a wide variety of sources, adopt measures to ensure full and effective access to the justice system, eliminate racial profiling and promote community-level initiatives. It also reiterated its support for General Assembly resolution 58/160, of 22 December 2003.

20. The CARICOM States would have hoped that racism would have been no more than a diminished and insignificant practice by the third millennium, and that colonialism, as an unfair political system, would not have endured into the twenty-first century. Nonetheless, it was clear that racism and xenophobia persisted as major causes of conflict and tension in many parts of the world. The CARICOM States reiterated their call to the international community to implement as far as possible the Durban decisions on behalf of the underprivileged, those who were subject to racial discrimination, those who had been colonized in the past, and those who remained under colonial domination.

21. **Mr. El-Badri** (Egypt) expressed his full support for the declaration formulated by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Humanity had suffered numerous maladies throughout its history, the most dangerous of which had been caused by man's contempt for man based on racial, gender, religious, linguistic and other grounds. The seriousness of that evil was well known, however, and thanks to

international efforts it was starting to be eradicated. That process had been crowned by the Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and by the Programme of Action to combat those scourges. Despite the agreements reached by States and peoples on steps to be taken to eliminate racism and discrimination, successes thus far had been few, and in some cases there had been regression.

22. The two reports of the Special Rapporteur sounded the alarm on numerous problems, including the resurgence of new nationalist and radical-right movements, which were fuelling xenophobia. A new danger had emerged on the international scene as a result of the deplorable events of 11 September 2001. The struggle against terrorism was being confused with the religious and ethnic origins of certain people, and had given rise to numerous cases of discrimination and persecution. Some Islamic and Arab communities were suffering growing discrimination on religious and ethnic grounds, with direct consequences for the life of the victims and their families. The international community needed to close ranks behind efforts to eliminate that new phenomenon, which could easily provoke new forms of hatred and persecution.

23. One of the symptoms of that social and human disease was the situation in the Middle East, and particularly in Palestine, which remained at the mercy of Israeli political intransigence and occupation. As a result of that situation, the Palestinians were suffering from a brutal occupation based on the implementation of racist and discriminatory policies. The speaker wondered how long the international community would continue to stand by with its arms folded in the face of daily human rights violations; how long would innocent people continue to be discriminated against and murdered; how long would Palestinian land remain confiscated; how long would Israel continue building its wall of racist separation. Egypt looked forward to the day when the entire international community would help bring an end to those sectarian practices that were being inflicted on a defenceless people.

24. It was time to develop new methods to speed up the struggle against racial, ethnic or linguistic discrimination. It was time for the international community to implement new measures against that scourge and others, such as the threat posed by nationalist and radical movements. States should adopt educational policies and study programmes that fostered awareness of human rights and put an end to radical ideas based on racial and ethnic considerations. The Special Rapporteur had promised to address that issue in his next reports.

25. **Mr. Cumberbatch** (Cuba) stated that racial discrimination was one of the cruellest manifestations of the exploitation that some peoples had been subject to for centuries, and was now being perpetuated by the widening gap being between rich and poor created by neoliberal globalization. The old idea that certain human beings were superior to others because of the colour of their skin, their spiritual practices or their genetic disposition, was today hiding behind the profound irrefutability of cultural, ethnic or religious diversity. Although modern science had clearly shown that human beings scarcely differed one from another, those who aimed to control the planet continued to proclaim their superiority.

26. Technological progress, new legislation, and the radical transformation of modern social sciences had all failed to put an end to racism and xenophobia. In wealthy societies such manifestations were a logical consequence of the desire to dominate. Racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, along with anti-Semitism and islamophobia, were on the rise in the most developed European nations, and the traditional victims of discrimination had now been joined by immigrants, refugees and non-nationals. There had also been an alarming upsurge of political parties on the extreme right that mobilized large sectors of society, created networks to disseminate their ideas, and propagate violence beyond their borders. In the United States of America, neofascist organizations also were abundant, which disseminated their racist, xenophobic and sectarian propaganda throughout the media. That phenomenon had increased following the tragic events of 11 September 2001. The new ideological climate tended to label populations, and even cultures and religions, as "high-risk". Historical amnesia seemed to have erased from the memory the terrible armed conflicts that had caused those views of the world.

27. In view of that reality, it was very important to implement the measures envisaged in the third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Joint action was needed from all United Nations institutions and programmes, treaty bodies, the Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary agencies and special

procedures, in order to widely disseminate the Durban accords and integrate them into their respective mandates. The Conference had contributed to international cooperation in the fight against racism and to the critical evaluation of historical crimes against humanity. It had also helped to identify the causes and origins of racism, issued a condemnation of its contemporary manifestations, and put forward concrete proposals. The main objective was to ensure that the agreements contained in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action were fulfilled, and new initiatives promoted to resolve major issues that remained pending following the Durban conference, such as full restoration of the dignity of the victims of those pernicious practices and, in particular, compensation for the grave harm caused. The Cuban delegation reiterated its willingness to support all actions to that end.

28. **Ms. Joseph** (Saint Lucia) highlighted the importance of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, enshrined in numerous international and United Nations instruments. That principle held enormous significance for non-self-governing territories, for which reason it was crucial to support the work of the Committee of 24 and the Fourth Committee. In that connection, it was important to recognize the logical connection that existed between the work of the aforementioned United Nations committees, and that of the Third Committee, which emphasized the human rights dimension of the process of self-determination. The Third and Fourth Committees should collaborate closely to promote ideas reflecting the convergence of their mandates on the issue of self-determination.

29. As a former colonial territory that had gained its independence through a process of self-determination, Saint Lucia focused on the territories in its region that had yet to exercise that fundamental right. Although the United Nations had been contributing to the process of self-determination since the end of the Second World War, there were still 16 territories that had not achieved full self-government and remained in a situation of political and constitutional dependency. Greater efforts were needed to enable the peoples of those territories to obtain the right to self-determination. The international community could make a significant contribution in that regard by implementing General Assembly resolutions approved on recommendation by the Third and Fourth Committees.

30. Saint Lucia endorsed the commitment expressed in the 14th Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in August 2004 in South Africa, which had underscored the continued validity of the fundamental and inalienable right of peoples to self-determination, irrespective of the size of their territory, geographic location, population and natural resources, and it renewed its commitment to hasten full implementation of the Plan of Action of the Decade for the Elimination of Colonialism. Nonetheless, although the size of a territory should not prevent its self-determination, major obstacles persisted in small territories.

31. Despite the decisions taken by the General Assembly in relation to the First and Second International Decade for the Elimination of Colonialism, the majority of the measures proposed had either not been carried out, or else had been applied only partially, particularly those that were to have been carried out by the United Nations system. The mandate of the General Assembly in relation to self-determination could only be fulfilled through concerted effort to implement the key recommendations contained in its resolutions and decisions. In that regard, the mid-term review of the Plan of Action of the International Decade for the Elimination of Colonialism, scheduled for 2005, would highlight the obstacles to achieving self-determination for small territories. It was to be hoped that the review would yield useful recommendations on how the United Nations system could implement the actions that the international community had repeatedly asked it to take.

32. **Ms. Bethel** (Bahamas) fully aligned itself with the statements made by the delegations of Qatar, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Dominica, on behalf of the Caribbean Community. As party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Government of the Bahamas had collaborated with the Caribbean Community, the Organization of American States, the Commonwealth and the United Nations in activities aimed at putting an end to racism and racial discrimination; it had also participated in the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban in 2001, and was fully committed to implementation of

the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The international community needed to remain on its guard against a resurgence of old racist ideologies and the appearance of new forms of intolerance, particularly through abuse of modern information and communication technologies.

33. Her country had participated in drafting the CARICOM Charter of Civil Society, which was essentially served as a Bill of Rights for all inhabitants of the region, regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, creed or nationality. Signing of the Charter was a sine qua non for membership of the Caribbean Community.

34. The Bahamas had created institutions and designed policies that fostered a climate of tolerance and respect for diversity. Its Constitution contained provisions on fundamental rights and freedoms, applicable to all its citizens irrespective of their race or ethnic origin. Those measures had been put into practice through the absolute prohibition of discrimination of any kind in the domains of law, employment, education, healthcare and other social services. Steps had been taken to introduce civic awareness courses in national school curricula, which addressed the issue of racism and racial discrimination. The most vivid demonstration of the country's commitment to tolerance and respect for diversity was the International Cultural Weekend, held in October each year, in which representatives from over 50 nationalities living in the Bahamas displayed their art, culture, food and traditions.

35. **Ms. Aghajanian** (Armenia) stated that individual human rights could not be fully guaranteed unless peoples' right to self-determination were exercised. Unfortunately, attempts to suppress that right were frequent, and had often led to military confrontation. The international community should be aware that the means to deal with those issues were unsatisfactory. Ill-advised attempts to juxtapose the principles of self-determination and territorial integrity so as to give one priority over the other, were not a recipe for success. A balanced framework needed to be defined to allow those two principles to be reconciled, for which a human rights approach was required to ensure that democracy and freedoms were not undermined.

36. The people of Nagorno-Karabakh had also attempted to exercise their right to self-determination, initially peacefully, although later they had had to fight to defend it; and, at the present time, they were seeking a negotiated settlement. Azerbaijan had for years rejected appeals for a peaceful and legal solution to the problem, and had long been recruiting mercenaries and international terrorists, whose names appeared on the lists of terrorists sought by justice systems throughout the world today, to fight against Armenian men and women who were defending their land and lives. The secession of Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan during the Soviet era was legal, peaceful and just; and carried out through referendum. In fact, it had been fully in line with the principles of international law and Soviet legislation in force at the time. No attempt by Azerbaijan to fit the facts and legal norms of the time to its own invented framework could alter the real course of events. Having exercised its inalienable right to self-determination Nagorno-Karabakh, was attempting to construct a democratic and open society in which the rights and freedoms of its citizens would be guaranteed. The authorities of the region were determined to democratize their society, as shown by the presidential, parliamentary and local elections that had been held over the last decade, in conformity with OSCE decisions.

37. For an issue as complex and delicate as peoples' right to self-determination, there was no "one-size-fits-all" solution. It was regrettable that the other negotiating party had preferred warmongering and incitement of anti-Armenian hatred, rather than serious efforts to find a negotiated solution to the conflict. The Azerbaijani authorities maintained their aggressive rhetoric and continued to brainwash their people, creating "heroes" who believed that killing a fellow Armenian compatriot in his sleep in Budapest was a patriotic act, and aborting a cooperative exercise with NATO on its own territory by refusing to accept Armenian participants. The negatively charged atmosphere that Azerbaijan was creating in detriment to confidence-building between the two peoples was extremely worrying, and there was a real danger that those verbal expressions of hatred against Armenia would endanger the ceasefire. The history of Europe was full of examples of xenophobia and intolerance being propagated to create fertile ground for subsequent violence. Armenia considered that in the twenty-first century, the political will of the people should prevail in resolving conflicts.

38. **Mr. Misra** (India) noted that the report of the Secretary-General on global activities for the total

elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related forms of intolerance, relating to comprehensive implementation of and follow-up of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, had concluded that a more decisive effort was needed to combat manifestations of racial discrimination and xenophobia.

39. The study on political platforms that promoted or incited racial discrimination showed that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance had been on the rise in many parts of the developed world; and that, in addition to their traditional victims, they were now affecting groups such as immigrants, refugees and non-nationals. Another grave danger was posed by the influence of far-right ideologies in traditionally democratic parties of Europe and other parts of the world. The war against terrorism following the 11 September attacks had created a new dynamic that tended to view the traditional victims of racial discrimination as groups fostering terrorism. The study called on States to exercise greater control over racist statements made by the representatives of political parties and other ideological movements, insisted that freedom of expression could not be used as an excuse for incitement of that kind, and called for legislation to prohibit the promotion of racist and xenophobic ideas, including Internet sites that propagated contents of that type. Lastly, the study recommended the establishment of early warning systems and preventive mechanisms to monitor racial conflicts.

40. The interim report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, stated that new forms of discrimination had appeared in addition to the traditional ones, particularly in the framework of the fight against terrorism. The struggle against terrorism could not be allowed to overshadow the fight against all forms of racism and discrimination. The Special Rapporteur noted the alarming increase in the number of Internet sites and messages used by racist and xenophobic organizations to transmit racial hatred; for that reason, India agreed on the need to draft an additional protocol to the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, containing legal measures to combat the use of the Internet for racist or xenophobic purposes. It also agreed with the recommendation that the Assembly should focus its attention on contemporary forms of racial discrimination that particularly affected immigrants, refugees and non-citizens.

41. Lastly, the representative recalled the leading role that India had played in the historical struggle for decolonization and at the forefront of the movement to secure the right of peoples to self-determination and economic, social and cultural development. It was a fundamental principle of law that freedom came with responsibility; and self-determination could not be used as an instrument to promote subversion and erode the political cohesion or territorial integrity of Member States of the United Nations. It could also not be abused to encourage secession or undermine pluralistic and democratic States, nor could it legitimize ethnic, religious segregation and extreme nationalism on the specious grounds that societies needed to be constituted on homogeneous lines before they could be tolerant of diversity and accept multi-culturalism. Nor could the right to self-determination be invoked to justify territorial expansion, through terrorism and violence.

42. *Ms. Kusorgbor (Ghana) took the Chair at that point.*

43. **Mr. Farrokhnejad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) stated that the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that affected millions of people, required conviction, consistency, perseverance and determination from all members of the international community. The report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance showed that one of the main manifestations of such phenomena at the present time was islamophobia, a form of intolerance that was extremely worrying for Muslim communities in various parts of the world. In particular, since the terrorist attacks of 11 September, there had been a spiral of violence, discrimination and physical aggression against that community. It was deplorable that certain Governments were combating terrorism by prohibiting religious acts in public schools, thereby aggravating the situation and running the risk of promoting and legitimizing discrimination against Muslim people.

44. The Islamic Republic of Iran invited all States facing the problem of islamophobia to review and revise their policies or laws that served to encourage or in any way provoke violation of the rights of Muslim communities. Member States and other influential

actors needed to develop a strategy to combat Islamophobia as a matter of urgency, based on the opinions and recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, the report of the Special Rapporteur, the Inter-Governmental Working Group on effective implementation of the Durban documents, and the eminent experts group.

45. Iran was committed to policies aimed at eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms, both nationally and internationally. At the national level, over the last 20 years, measures had been introduced to promote the economic, social and cultural life of the different ethnic groups living in the country, in the framework of the three economic, social and cultural development programmes, and it had encouraged intervention by various ethnic groups in political life, as shown by their greater participation in parliamentary, presidential and local elections. At the international level, the Islamic Republic of Iran had cooperated with other members of the international community to eliminate all forms of racism and racial discrimination throughout the world, particularly through active participation in the collective movement to bring an end to the apartheid regime in South Africa. Iran had also hosted the Asian preparatory meeting for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The Islamic Republic of Iran remained determined to full implementation of the commitments assumed in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

46. **Ms. Rasheed** (Palestine) stated that she represented a people that continued to be subjected to one of the most brutal forms of colonialism in modern history. At a time when decolonization was virtually complete, the Palestinian people continued to be denied their right to national identity on their own land – their right to self-determination – as a result of Israeli occupation in flagrant violation of legitimacy and international law. Every year that passed without self-determination for the Palestinian people being recognized meant another year of intolerable suffering and misery. Any attempt to ease the situation on the ground without genuinely addressing the core issue of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, would fall short of a genuine solution and fail to achieve full, permanent and lasting peace in the Middle East.

47. Since September 2000, Israel had been waging a violent military campaign against Palestinian people in the occupied territories; over the last four years, the occupying forces had continued to launch military raids and attacks, bombardments and incendiary acts against defenceless Palestinian people; and the number of casualties had risen as a consequence: over 3,450 Palestinians had died, including 760 children, with over 50,000 wounded.

48. Another factor that denied the Palestinian people their basic and fundamental rights to free determination was the creation of new facts on the ground, such as the network of illegal settlements and by-pass roads for illegal settlers, and the illegal building of a wall on land confiscated from the indigenous population throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, including east Jerusalem. Despite having been ruled contrary to international law by the International Court of Justice, construction of the wall was uprooting hundreds of Palestine civilians who were denied access to their lands, work, social services and, in many cases, their own homes. Lastly, the construction of the wall undermined the right to self-determination and rendered the two-State solution virtually impossible.

49. The Palestinian people had made historic compromises to exercise their inalienable rights and live in peace and dignity; the speaker therefore urged the international community not to lose sight of the fact that the occupation remained the most pervasive cause of all violations and injustices committed against the Palestinian people. As such, the occupation had to be brought to an end to enable the Palestinian population to live a normal and free life in the independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

50. **Mr. Neil** (Jamaica), referring to the remarks made by the representatives of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Dominica on behalf of CARICOM, made a number of observations relating mainly to the implementation of rules established in conventions to which most States were parties, and the conclusions of conferences, particularly the Plan of Action of the Durban conference.

51. The Secretary-General's reports showed that discrimination and intolerance were on the rise, and that was a cause for concern. The speaker unreservedly supported the study requested by the Secretary-General into the political platforms that promoted or incited

racial discrimination, and the constructive recommendations it contained on the need to discourage all forms of racist propaganda, racial discrimination and xenophobia.

52. As regards the exercise of freedom of expression, the expansion of communications media, including the Internet, had laid them open to abuse, including the use of such media to disseminate racist propaganda. A balance needed to be restored in democratic societies, and steps needed to be taken to ensure that freedom of expression was exercised responsibly.

53. In relation to the function of non-governmental organizations, the Speaker believed that collaboration with such organizations should be strengthened, particularly because of the major contribution they had made in the past, for example in mobilization against apartheid.

54. Lastly, regarding the implementation of conventions and the conclusions of conferences concerning the fight against racial discrimination, he recalled that the abolition of slavery had been celebrated in 2000, and the bicentenary of the independence of Haiti had been commemorated in 2004. Attention should also be drawn to the activities of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, in defence of those that had suffered from the aftermath of racism. In the framework of implementation of the Durban Plan of Action, the speaker reaffirmed his support for the corrective measures established in the declaration, in order to suppress the legacy of racism and historical injustices.

55. **Mr. Kazykhanov** (Kazakhstan) began by saying that his country, which was a State party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, wholeheartedly supported the activities of the international community aimed at eradicating such phenomena, in accordance with recommendations of the World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The Republic of Kazakhstan was a multiethnic and multicultural state, with some 130 ethnic groups, 45 religious confessions and numerous ethnocultural and linguistic groups living within its borders. His Government was taking steps to ensure that all such groups participated in social life under equal conditions, and considered it a priority to combat social divisions arising from ethnic, racial and religious causes, to preserve traditions and cultures and offer new opportunities for their development. The main legislation prohibiting discrimination against national minorities included the Constitution, which guaranteed equality for all ethnic groups in the country; the Law on Public Service, which prohibited discrimination on grounds of race, ethnic origin and language against persons wishing to enter the civil service; and the Law on Culture, in which article 4 prohibited propaganda and advocacy of racial and ethnic superiority.

56. Kazakhstan had created a unique institution of social accord, the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, whose strategic purpose was to strengthen inter-ethnic relations, promote full development of national cultures and foster the interests of national minorities in preparing and implementing public policies and social consensus programmes. Sociological monitoring showed that inter-ethnic relations were evolving positively, thanks to an educational, cultural and linguistic environment that was appropriate for all national minorities. In areas where national minorities predominated, there were ethnic schools, along with ethnic and cultural centres offering language classes and courses on ethnic traditions and ceremonies. There were also theatres for ethnic minorities, and newspapers, magazines and books in minority languages. The Constitution and other relevant laws recognized the right to study and use mother tongues, and article 6 of the Law on Languages recognized the right of every citizen to freely choose their language of communication, education, teaching and artistic expression.

57. The leadership of Kazakhstan was pursuing systematic policies aimed at promoting the interests of all ethnic groups in the country and harmonizing inter-ethnic relations. Such policies, which enjoyed the support of most civil institutions and citizens and cooperation from the international community, including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, offered a solid foundation for further stabilization of inter-ethnic relations in the country. Kazakhstan had created all the conditions needed to revitalize the culture of its population groups, and had established permanent and friendly dialogue between all ethnic and confessional groups living in the country. Since the break up of the Soviet Union, there had not been a single conflict based on ethnic origin, religion or race in Kazakhstan. Civil peace was the main accomplishment of its populations.

and it needed to be preserved and strengthened for the benefit of future generations.

58. **Ms. Thandar** (Myanmar) began by endorsing the declaration formulated by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She then praised the comprehensive and inclusive approach taken by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in his report entitled "Fight against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action". Nonetheless, she questioned the accuracy of a number of the figures contained in the report.

59. Her country believed that, while racism had reached its zenith during the colonial period, the end of colonial domination had brought phenomenon. The Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, which ended last year, and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, were important milestones in the fight against racism and racial discrimination. Myanmar condemned racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance whenever and wherever they occurred.

60. Myanmar was a nation of many nationalities, which recognized the equality of its citizens, regardless of race or religion. Although during its century of domination the colonial power had made widespread use of the "divide and rule" policy, the overwhelming majority of the nationalities of Myanmar had chosen to remain in the Union at the time of independence. Post-independence armed insurgencies had been motivated by colonial, ideological and economic ideals, and were not related to racism or racial and religious discrimination. The various races of Myanmar had lived together and interacted harmoniously for centuries. Contrary to the claims made in the report of the Special Rapporteur, the Kayin (Karen) people were not subject to exclusion or persecution. The Kayin people were the second-largest ethnic group in Myanmar, and, apart from living in the state of Kayin were also spread across the country's other states and territories. The state of Kayin, was in turn home to members of other racial groups such as the Bamar, the Pao, the Mon or the Rakhine. The same was true of the Shan people, whose members lived not only in the state of Shan – the largest in Myanmar, which also had multi-ethnic representation – but also in the country's other states and territories. Myanmar was a Union of 135 races, all of them indigenous. The references to the races of Myanmar contained in the report on racism and racial discrimination were totally unjustified and presumably politically motivated, for which reason they should never have been included in the report.

61. **Ms. Majali** (Jordan) noted that the international community had collectively affirmed the right to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or foreign occupation, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, international covenants on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural ones, and the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action of 1993. The international community had also recognized the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, which was based on international law, legitimacy and numerous international declarations, particularly General Assembly resolutions 181 (II), of 29 November 1947, and 194 (III), of 11 December 1948. Jordan welcomed Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), of 12 March 2002, and subsequent resolutions supporting the vision of the Middle East based on two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized boundaries. It once again reiterated its full support for exercise of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people on their own national soil, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

62. The tragic escalation of violence and resulting serious human rights violations, described by the Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories and on the right to food, were a direct consequence of the military occupation and violations of international law by the occupying power. The Palestinian people continued to be deprived of their inalienable right to self-determination, and were enduring numerous and constant violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Those included repression and collective punishment, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, settlement building and, more recently, construction of a wall of separation that consolidated further Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and jeopardized Palestinian national interests, thereby undermining the possibility of establishing a viable Palestinian State and, ultimately, the achievement of peace. Although all States, including those of the Middle East, had the right

to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders, peace and security in that region would not be achieved through military force, but by bringing to an end the occupation and subjugation of the Palestinian people and their land, and implementing United Nations resolutions, including Security Council Resolution 1397 (2002), which called for a two-State solution. To that end, Jordan expected the Government of Israel to fulfil the obligations under the Quartet-backed Road Map for Peace in the Middle East, officially endorsed by Palestinians and Israelis at the Aqaba Summit, which envisaged the establishment of an independent Palestinian State by 2005, and set forth clear principles and mechanisms for a just and lasting settlement, namely: two secure States, with their respective capitals in Jerusalem, Israeli withdrawal from the Palestine territories, dismantlement of settlements, and an agreed solution to the refugee problem.

63. In conclusion, Jordan called upon the Government of Israel to take all necessary steps to end the current situation of crisis and violence in the occupied Palestine territory, resume peace talks, and implement all relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular concerning the wall, and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, namely that such construction seriously violated the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

64. Jordan also called upon the international community, including the Quartet, to address the tragic current circumstances and secure a resumption of the peace process.

65. **Ms. Alhaj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed her country's support for the declaration formulated by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and expressed concern at the resurgence of racism, which was currently harnessing, for political purposes, the new information and communication technologies and global media to project a distorted and erroneous image of certain cultures and religions, under the concept of "conflict of civilizations". Actions and terms such as those were fuelling hatred against certain groups and were undermining peace and stability throughout the world. Nonetheless, the Syrian Arab Republic was confident that it would be possible to counteract that trend by fulfilling commitments assumed and specified in international instruments and implementing the Durban Programme of Action, demonstrating the necessary political will to energetically reject all manifestations of racism and racial discrimination worldwide. Having made a careful study of reports submitted on the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and comprehensive implementation of and follow up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Syrian Arab Republic believed a balance needed to be struck between the need to guarantee respect for those commitments to achieve the Durban objectives, and the advisability of not focusing excessively on a specific region or issue. Future reports should take account of general progress achieved in implementation of the Durban Programme of Action, and not confine itself exclusively to certain aspects.

66. All Member States of the United Nations were fully aware of the serious deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, as a consequence of the measures adopted by Israel in its role as occupying power, which were in contravention of international law and undermined the rights of citizens in occupied Arab territories. In this regard, it was appropriate to mention the construction of a racist separation wall and extension of illegal settlements in the occupied Arab territories of Palestine and the Syrian Golan Heights. Moreover, Israel had expelled Arab citizens from the land in which they lived in order to alter their demographic composition; and Israeli political and religious leaders were constantly making racist statements against Arabs and Muslims.

67. The right to self-determination was enshrined in the United Nations Charter, General Assembly resolutions such as 1514 (XIV), of 14 December 1960, and the corresponding provisions of international conventions on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights. The Syrian Arab Republic lamented the fact that so far, the United Nations had been incapable of averting the oppressive and arbitrary measures adopted by the occupying power, Israel, against the Palestinian people, thereby preventing them from exercising their right to self-determination. The Syrian Arab Republic had always given political asylum to people who needed it, offering them equal rights with Syrian citizens. It had also been one of the first countries to adhere to conventions against racism and to commit to their implementation. Peace and security in the Middle East, a genuine barometer of peace and stability worldwide,

would only be achieved when the illegal Israeli occupation of Arab territories was brought to an end, and the Palestinian people were allowed to exercise their right to self-determination and establish an independent State on their land, with Jerusalem as its capital. The United Nations was called upon to play a key role in that regard to enable peoples to exercise their right to self-determination, despite attempts to keep it on the sidelines of the fight against racism and racial discrimination throughout the world.

68. **Mr. Mammadov** (Azerbaijan) began by stating that his country had always supported the norms and principles of international law, including the right of peoples to self-determination. Those rules and principles constituted the basis of the foreign policy of Azerbaijan. The speaker went on to argue that principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, on the one hand, and self-determination, on the other, were not contradictory, but mutually complementary when applied in accordance with the United Nations Charter. In relation to the conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan, there was no conflict whatsoever between those two principles, because the right to self-determination was not applicable to the Armenian population living in that region, for two reasons: Armenians had exercised their right to self-determination in the framework of the current State, and the Armenian population of the Nagorno-Karabakh region was a minority living in the territory of a sovereign State.

69. In the decisions adopted by international organizations in relation to the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, account had been taken of the relevant norms of international law, in particular the rights of persons belonging to minorities and the principle of the territorial integrity of States. Occupation of part of Azerbaijani territory by Armenia in 1993 had led the United Nations Security Council to address the problem and pass four historic resolutions reaffirming respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Those resolutions rendered any dispute over the State to which Nagorno-Karabakh belonged, or the right of its population to secede, a completely futile and senseless exercise.

70. The decisions of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) had offered a legal foundation for solving the conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in accordance with the aforementioned Security Council resolutions. At the Lisbon Summit of 1996, for example, the sitting OSCE president had put forward three principles for solving the conflict: territorial integrity of Armenia and Azerbaijan; the highest possible level of self-rule for Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan; and guaranteed security for Nagorno-Karabakh and its whole population. Those principles had been supported by all OSCE member States, except Armenia, which had prolonged the conflict and obstructed its solution.

71. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan had also been considered by the Council of Europe, whose Committee of Ministers had stated that the solution should be based on the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights and the rights of minorities, and the inviolability of frontiers, in addition to territorial integrity and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In 1997, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe had adopted a resolution declaring that the conflict in and around Nagorno-Karabakh should be the subject of negotiations between the parties, bearing in mind, in particular, the principles of the inviolability of frontiers and the broad status of self-rule in the region.

72. The decisions of international organizations did not prejudge how to solve the conflict, which would have to be based on the restoration and strict maintenance of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and on preservation and encouragement of the identity of the Armenian minority living on its territory. In that context, his Government had repeatedly expressed a willingness to grant Nagorno-Karabakh the highest degree of self-rule within Azerbaijan. Nonetheless, it would be very hard to solve the conflict so long as one of the parties to the conflict continued to ignore the efforts made by the other, and relevant decisions taken by international organizations, especially the Security Council, and persisted in attempts to impose on the international community its own interpretation of the norms and principles of international law, including the right of peoples to self-determination.

73. **The Chairwoman** at that point opened a period for statements in exercise of the right of reply pursuant to Article 115 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.

74. **Mr. Jegermanis** (Latvia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that earlier in the meeting the representative of the Russian Federation had made completely unfounded, unfriendly and inappropriate statements about Latvia. Although official rhetoric of that type had formed part of Russian foreign policy ever since Latvia had regained its independence, it was nonetheless a total distortion of the reality of his country, which had made progress on human rights that had been recognized by practically all international and regional organizations, such as the European Union, OSCE and the Council of Europe. It was discouraging that the opinions expressed by the Russian Federation increasingly diverged from those of international organizations, human rights experts and other States. Instead of encouraging national minorities to make efforts to integrate into Latvian society, the Russian Federation was doing everything possible to complicate the process.

75. Nonetheless, Latvia was grateful to the Russian Federation for its efforts to draw the attention of the international community to the problem of racism and intolerance, for the situation in the Russian Federation had indeed deteriorated. Youth organizations were proliferating, some of which received financial support from political parties; xenophobic attitudes were rife, and a significant percentage of the population professed anti-Semitic ideas.

76. Latvia was concerned at the increasing control exerted by the Government of the Russian Federation on communications media, its involvement in the activities of non-governmental organizations, and the growing centralization of power. Such measures were inconsistent with statements made by Russia earlier in the meeting regarding the importance of addressing problems of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance. It was to be hoped that those concerns would lead to real measures being adopted domestically by Russian politicians, who all too often remained silent in the face of such phenomena.

77. **Ms. Kleitman** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, stated that the so-called racist security wall was a misnomer, and added tendentious elements to an already complex conflict. In that regard, the speaker noted the dissenting opinion attached to the advisory ruling of the International Court of Justice on that issue, which stated that it was not the wall that represented a serious impediment to the exercise of the right to self-determination, but the problems stemmed from lack of capacity or will among the parties to take steps to resolve it.

78. One delegate had said earlier that the simplest way to resolve the problem would be to end the occupation. But the conflict was not simply one-dimensional. Israel wanted to resolve the question of the disputed territories, and in 1993 had embarked upon measures to that end trusting in the good faith of the Palestinian leaders. Areas of agreement had been identified, and Israel had hoped to hold negotiations on permanent status. The Palestinians had solemnly undertaken to actively fight terrorism, put an end to incitement and confiscate illegal weapons. Nonetheless, the reality had been very different, and in that regard, the speaker would have liked to hear Arab speakers clearly and unequivocally condemn terrorism and bomb attacks perpetrated against civilians.

79. **Ms. Aghajanian** (Armenia), also speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the allusion made by Azerbaijan to supposed military aggression by Armenia was captious. The issue had never been between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. The situation was the result of a decision by Azerbaijan to use military force to repress the legitimate, just and peaceful attempt by the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to exercise their right to self-determination as guaranteed by international law and the United Nations Charter.

80. The speaker noted that Azerbaijan often misquoted Security Council resolutions, but before interpreting them in the way that best suited their point of view, the representatives of Azerbaijan would be well advised to read such resolutions carefully, because they recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as party to the conflict.

81. It had been said that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh did not have the right to self-determination. In fact, Nagorno-Karabakh had been subjected to the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan by force, so it had never been deprived of its inherent right to self-determination. It had never been part of an independent Azerbaijan, and it was not so now. To support his argument, the speaker cited a memorandum of the Secretary General of the League of Nations, of 1920, which referred to Azerbaijan as a trans-Caucasian territory that had previously formed part of the Russian provinces, but had never been a

State the Republic of Azerbaijan had been denied admission to the League of Nations.

82. To explain its opposition to the independence of Karabakh, Azerbaijan had invoked its territorial integrity, yet such claims did not appear to be legally valid. Prior to Soviet domination, Azerbaijan was not a de jure State, nor did it exert de facto control over the territories it laid claim to. In 1921 the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan had been created as an administrative unit within arbitrarily defined borders that embraced the lands of various national groups. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992, the borders of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan were merely administrative, so it was impossible to apply to them the principle of territorial integrity defended in the Helsinki Final Act; nor, therefore, could it be argued that Karabakh had violated that principle.

83. **Mr. Lukyantsev** (Russian Federation), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, recalled that the Latvian delegate had claimed that the statement made by the Russian Federation about Latvian legislation was totally unfounded. The speaker invited the representative of Latvia to make a careful study of the documents prepared by international experts on human rights, together with observations made by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination following the debate on the periodic report on Latvia, together with the corresponding recommendations.

84. **Ms. Rasheed** (Palestine) said that the Israeli representative had spoken at length about peace and the solution proposed in the Road Map, but the Prime Minister of Israel had stated that he was not even willing to negotiate, and that the only initiative possible was the separation plan. According to the Israeli representative, the separation plan showed that his Government did not wish to dominate the Palestinian people and recognized their right to self-determination. That was very hard to believe, however, since the occupying power had shown that it was not interested in peace and only sought to perpetuate the submission of another people and its territory through continuous acts of aggression, expansion and annexation.

85. The Government of Israel had hijacked the concept of security, applying it solely to Israelis and depriving the Palestinian people of all aspects of personal, political, legal, territorial, historical, cultural, economic and even human security. The Israeli representative had reaffirmed that the construction of the expansionist wall, or "fence", as the Israeli Government calls it, was a security measure to prevent terrorism. That was not only illogical and lacking in credibility, but also represented a repeat of the same lie and pretext that had been used by Israel over the years to perpetrate all its crimes against the Palestinian people. It was important to remember that Israel had repeatedly used the pretext of security to justify illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian territory. In reality, the whole question revolved around a single issue: land – Palestinian land – and Israeli aims to expand and illegitimately conquer more land at the expense of the Palestine people and their rights, including the right to self-determination. The pretext alleged by the Government of Israel for building the wall was therefore entirely baseless. Suicide attempts perpetrated by Palestinians, alone or in groups, against civilians in Israel were to be condemned. There was no justification for such terror; nor for the State terrorism perpetrated by Israel against Palestinian civilians, who are living under occupation as hostages. Nonetheless, such violence had not emerged out of nothing, but had a direct and identifiable origin: the stranglehold of Israeli occupation and its cumulative effects. The only real solution was a negotiated and just political solution; not a military solution, or an unfair solution imposed unilaterally.

86. **Mr. Mammadov** (Azerbaijan), replying to the most important issues raised by the representative of Armenia, stated that it was Nagorno-Karabakh and not Armenia that had occupied the Azerbaijani territories; for it would have been impossible for the 100,000 Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh to have occupied 20 per cent of a country consisting of 7 or 8 million inhabitants. In response to the claim that Nagorno-Karabakh had never formed part of Azerbaijan but had been forcibly annexed by Stalin, he stated that Karabakh had always been part of historical Azerbaijan and had been populated by Azerbaijanis. In 1918 Armenia had proclaimed its independence and asked the Government of Azerbaijan to yield land to enable it to establish its own State; in solidarity, the Government of Azerbaijan had ceded territory on the understanding that in the future the two neighbouring countries would be linked and that Yerevan would become the capital of the current Armenian State. The decision by the Soviet Union in 1923 to

keep Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan was not imposed by force, because that territory was already a de jure part of Azerbaijan, as had been recognized previously by the League of Nations.

87. **Ms. Aghjanian** (Armenia) stated that as Yerevan had been established in 782 BC, its territory could not have been gifted to Armenia by Azerbaijan. Those were the historical facts which could be easily proven, unlike the reinvented history being presented by Azerbaijan.

88. **Mr. Mammadov** (Azerbaijan) reiterated his previous position.

*The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.*